System Status: Alert

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by NeoAsh

Summary

Sometime after Electrode's frenzy, but before Avalugg's, Ingo regains his memories. There's no sudden epiphany as to why he's there, or how to get home, but his search for answers does lead him to finding out about an entirely different problem. He handles it with the confidence and gravity befitting of a Subway Boss.

AKA: a long excuse to have Ingo lay the verbal smack down on Kamado bc he desperately needed a wake up call and I think he should be yelled at <3 by train man <33 just for fun <333

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Irida has been here before.

Ingo is unconscious, having been found injured in the Bonechill Wastes, bleeding from his head. Gaeric brought him to the settlement with the chilling report that Ingo's last words before passing out had been a question of where he was. He's been brought to the healer's tent. Irida is waiting for him to wake.

She's lived this day before, and she hates the fear that wells up in her at the thought of repeating the rest of that day.

A small groan interrupts her dour thoughts.

"Ingo? How are you feeling?"

"Lady Irida," *thank almighty Sinnoh*, "I- "

His jaw clicks shut quickly. Irida's relief vanishes as soon as it appeared. Then, Ingo is in motion, sitting up quickly and casting his gaze around the tent so frantically he looks like a startled Buneary.

"Ingo! Settle down. You're going to injure yourself further."

Ingo is nothing if not dutiful, so she's caught completely off guard when he disregards her command entirely.

"*Settle down?*" He shouts. "I have *settled* for far too long!"

He stands, except, he's much taller than usual when he does so. Irida's eyes widen in shock at the way he dwarfs her. With how he usually stands, he's not much taller than her, and now he seems too tall for the tent. The way he holding himself is completely different.

The sad slump of his shoulders has been replaced with a new kind of stiffness, one which draws them back instead of forward. The bend in his knees seems to have been forgone entirely. When Ingo meets her eyes, they are *alert* in a way she's never seen before, not even at his most attentive.

"Where is my belt?" he asks urgently.

Loudly, as well. Why is he being so loud? He was asking Irida, not Lina in the coastlands.

"Lady Irida," he snaps. "Where is my belt?"

His tone brokers no argument. Since when is Ingo so commanding?

"It's put away, someone will get it for you when the healers are done checking over you." Her own tone also offers no concession; whatever is going on with Ingo, Irida is still in charge here. He's not running off before she's sure he's well.

"I do not need further maintenance! Please don't make my departure more difficult than it needs to be, Lady Irida."

"You will sit back down, Ingo. Gaeric told me you didn't know where you were before you passed out!"

"He misunderstood my question. Machamp wandered off while I was preoccupied gathering apricorns. I was going to ask Gaeric if he knew where I could find them, only to be halted mid-track when his enthusiastic slap to my back caused me to straighten too quickly and hit my head on a tree branch."

That...sounded entirely believable. If it was true, then he really didn't need to be kept in bed.

There was still the issue of Ingo's...new demeanor. Though that *could* be attributed to worry for Machamp.

Could be. Irida's not in the habit of lying to herself. Ingo was still standing tall despite being to told to stay down three times.

"I believe you, Ingo, but tell me what else is bothering you."

Ingo hesitates. Whether at having his agitation addressed aloud, or having to put it in words, Irida doesn't know.

"Sinnoh," he chokes around the word. He clears his throat and tries again. "Almighty Sinnoh, in their vastness, has seen fit to restore my memory in its entirety."

She gasps. "Ingo! That's wonderful news!" He stiffens even more somehow. "Isn't it?"

He nods tightly. "It is. I can finally begin searching for a track that leads me home." He pauses like he's been struck with a sudden thought. Irida can't hope to guess what the thought was, but Ingo lets out a horrible sound that could be the beginning of a laugh or the end a sob. "I am verrrrry behind schedule," he whispers. "So incredibly off track, swords help me."

"Ingo." The man turns to her. "Ingo, please remember that the Pearl Clan is happy to help you. You've become a valuable member of our clan, and your service to Lady Sneasler has been vast." Irida loosens herself to encourage him out of his own stiffness. She meets his eyes, still burning and *alive* in ways previously unseen to her. "Ask for my help should you need it. Understand?"

Ingo is a hard man to read when only looking at his face, yet there's no mistaking the warm gratitude in his voice when he says, "Yes, Irida, I understand."

She allows him to walk out; he gathers his things and announces his departure quickly. Irida watches him walk away from the settlement. His stride is purposeful, powerful in a way that is new, but suits Ingo very well. Perhaps this is how he should have been all along.

Irida stands at the ledge until Ingo's unique colors are out of sight, then sighs to herself. Lady Sneasler won't be happy about this, for certain. Still, Irida wouldn’t dream of stopping Ingo from finding his way back to familiar spaces, and sincerely hopes that somewhere in the vastness of Hisui, Ingo finds what he needs to get home.

When Ingo later tells Akari how he recovered his memories, she laughs at him.

"Seriously? You fixed your brain damage with *more head trauma*?" She shakes her head in disbelief through her manic giggling. "I really do live in a bad anime."

"You can stop laughing anytime now."

"You literally knocked your memories loose!"

"Indeed," he concedes. "Would you care to let me conduct you through what I've learned about myself?"

That gets her attention. Akari stops laughing abruptly, sitting at attention to stare at Ingo with wide, curious eyes.

Amused, he loudly asks, "What would you like to know first?"

"Why do use so many train metaphors?!"

Ingo cannot help the short laugh that leaves him. Of all the questions to ask. He's not really surprised at the query, though; it's an odd quirk

for sure, especially when only she and Professor Laventon even know what a train is here in old Sinnoh.

Sinnoh. How odd the human mind can be, that he heard the word all over Hisui, yet never made any sort of connection. Not even a sense of deja-vu as many other seemingly random things elicited.

Akari pokes him. "Well?"

He shakes his head at her. "I am a subway boss. I work at Gear Station in Nimbasa City." At her confused hum he clarifies, "The Unova region. I help run the battle subway."

"Battle subway? Is that like a battle restaurant? Just...on a train instead of in a building?"

He considers it. It's not the comparison he would've made, but it's a place to start. "Not an un-apt comparison. You're talking about the Kalosian establishments, yes?"

"Yeah."

"Unlike in restaurants, trainers don't have to take part in battles to ride the subway. Should they choose to ride the subway as a challenger instead of a commuter, the battle subway has many train cars which each contain a trainer, and if challengers defeat enough trainers in a row, they make it to a boss car. They then got to battle either me, my brother Emmet, or the two of us together. The reward for good performance is BP."

"What does BP stand for?"

Ingo blinks. "Battle Points."

Akari mouths 'battle points' to herself as if the words are part of a puzzle. She's quiet for several seconds, face scrunched up like a displeased Shinx. Ingo is content to give her as much time as she needs to absorb the information, and busies himself with beginning on dinner.

A few minutes later, as he's considering what to prepare, Ingo hears a gasp from behind him. Akari must have figured out what she was trying to remember.

"YOU'RE A BATTLE FACILITY HEAD?"

"Yes!"

"INGO THAT'S SO COOL!"

Ingo feels himself blush. He's proud of his accomplishments as a trainer, and doubly proud of his subway, but it's been years since he's talked about his status as a subway boss to a young trainer outside of a battle scenario. The admiration amateurs sometimes hold for elite trainers is something Ingo himself felt toward many people in his youth, but being directly confronted with it now is a bit overwhelming.

"Thank you!"

Akari has gotten familiar with the walk between Jubilife and Ingo's warden cabin. Usually, she makes the trip there and back by herself, but sometimes Ingo offers to walk back with her, and she loves it whenever it happens. Not that she'd say it out loud, but it reminds her of when she was little and her mom would walk her home from school.

Adélie and her mom would walk hand in hand, swinging their arms so high that she would end up on her tiptoes for a moment. Little Adélie giggled every single time, delighted.

"Akari?" Right. Akari, not Adélie. Not out in the open, at least.

"I was thinking about school," she says. "Did you like school as a kid?"

Ingo tilts his head as he considers his answer. This is another thing she loves; that she can ask these questions now and Ingo will have real answers. It's exciting, and helpful for both of them. Sorting through a lifetime's worth of memories takes time, so Akari can get to know Ingo better and help Ingo get to know himself again all at the same time!

"I enjoyed math and science, especially the hands-on portions. Less so biology, which quite honestly bored me half to death. I enjoyed language arts to a point, the reading and the analysis writing. However, I detested argumentative essays and research papers. The formatting never made any sense to me, so I always made Emmet tell me which order to put things in."

Emmet. The smiling man in white who had haunted Ingo's reflection. Akari is glad Ingo finally has a name to put with the face.

Talking about the other man the first time had been...hard. Ingo was horrified with himself for forgetting; for getting complacent with forgetting.

Akari encouraged him to tell her about the man anyway. She tried to focus on asking for details that others don't always notice. Had he asked her why, she would have told him she didn't want to feel like she was being read a Poképedia page. Truly, it was so he could prove to himself he still remembered now that he *could* remember. Ingo hadn't asked why.

So, Ingo told her about his twin brother Emmet, who isn't allowed to wear velcro shoes anymore. Emmet, who prefers white in professional settings, but likes to wear yellow on his days off. Emmet, who is better with young children than Ingo due to his precise language and friendly expression (and terrible with teenagers for the same reasons). Emmet, who hates having an arm around his shoulders but loves linking elbows.

If Akari were honest, she might admit she's selfishly glad that Ingo's life was so intertwined with his twin's. It means that Ingo feels his loss keenly, but it also means he can describe Emmet in vivid detail. It means Akari can *almost* feel like she's met this piece of Ingo's family.

She's also *unselfishly* glad about the return of Ingo's memory, of course. She doesn't think anyone realized just *how much* the absence hurt him, because the difference between now and before was like the difference between Bellossom and Gloom, yet Akari knows he's still not *happy*. How could he be when his loved ones are so far away?

Akari isn't happy here either.

Long-term, that is. She's happy right now, in this moment.

"Wow, you made your brother *do your homework* for you? Scandalous!"

"Akari-"

"Scandalous, I say! That's not following the rules!"

Ingo simply sighs without looking at her. She beams. Ingo's face might not move as often as some people's, but his lips still tilt up when he's laughing. Refusing a verbal response just means he knows he'll give away his enjoyment with his voice. That disregarding sigh means Akari is winning.

It is the job of a subway boss to ensure the safety of all passengers. Primarily, this entailed thorough inspections of all tracks and trains to ensure smooth travel. However, a subway boss is also responsible for impressing upon the fellow staff the dangers of negligence, and the unacceptability of malicious actions.

Emmet accomplishes this succinctly, as he does with most things. Follow the rules. Rule number one is *safe driving*.

Ingo has always preferred to leave no room for interpretation in what principles they expect to be upheld. That way there's no way to claim plausible deniability.

Ingo is content to accompany Akari back to Jubilife. He doesn't often have a clear enough schedule for a round trip from Mt. Coronet to Jubilife, though now that he's setting his own itinerary, Ingo may find time to indulge her more often.

These trips of theirs make the child happy, and make him feel better too, as he can personally ensure the girl's safety. Akari may be a perfectly capable trainer, but Hisui doesn't have the infrastructure their time does to ensure safe travel.

Akari is used to those safeguards. On occasion, she still operates on the assumption that they're there, despite her efforts not to forget their absence. She's had some close calls.

Besides, he had business in Jubilife anyway. He needs to speak with Arezu about a haircut and getting rid of the unprofessional scruff on his chin. He also needs to speak with Anthe about new clothes to replace his Pearl Clan garb.

Irida is fully aware that he will no longer identify as Pearl Clan going ahead; it wouldn't be proper when he could disappear at any moment. While he would prefer to give proper notice of his departure, if it came down to returning home, he would take whatever accelerated timetable offered to him. It's only fair then, that Irida can immediately begin looking for someone to fill his current position, rather than scramble later.

Once Ingo and Akari make it to the village she runs off. He watches fondly as she enters Galaxy Hall, and wonders whether she's reporting to the professor or her captain Cyllene.

Galaxy Hall, what an extravagant building for a group so resource-

conscious. Ingo remembers the shiver that had run through him when he realized why "Galaxy Expedition Team" had alarmed him on first mention, even while amnesiac. Team Galactic, what a nasty affair. Unova has had its own problems with Evil Teams, but that didn't stop Ingo from worrying back then over the friends he'd made through the battle facility circles. It doesn't stop Ingo from worrying now about their intentions toward Akari, even though it's wrong to hold two very different organizations, separated by centuries, to the same scrutiny simply because of a similar name.

Ingo takes a deep breath to refocus on his schedule. Buy clothes from Anthe. Beg Arezu to shave him into shape. Stop fretting like a worried father over a girl who's not his daughter.

He approaches Anthe first. She’s surprised at the turn of events, but helps Ingo select a new wardrobe in neutral tones. Kindly, she offers to patch the place his hat has come undone.

Once Anthe salvages what she can of his poor cap, he makes his way to the hairdresser. Arezu is happy for Ingo about him regaining his memory. She is even happier at his request that she get rid of the beard.

"It just doesn't suit you at all, hon. Wait for old age to look like an old man, okay?"

Looking at his reflection in the mirror to observe Arezu's work, Ingo sees someone he has not seen in a while. For once, his reflection is not Emmet, nor an unfamiliar stranger that must somehow be him. Ingo looks like...himself. Misaligned from rough handling, but nothing a hot shower and a new hat wouldn't fix. He breathes a bit easier, walking out of the hair salon. It's an incredible relief to learn that he can still look like the man he's supposed to be.

While he's here, Ingo may as well speak to the Commander. By all accounts the man isn't the most welcoming or trusting, but Ingo knows that's to his own advantage; anything Kamado can do to send Ingo away faster, forever? He'll tell Ingo what he wants to know. If he actually knows anything, that is.

This is not how Ingo envisioned this meeting going. It had started off well enough, with Ingo's musings about the Commander's paranoid nature proving correct. He was all too happy to find a way to send Ingo back to where he came from.

Commander Kamado referred him to the Survey Corp, as Ingo probably should have foreseen he would, and wished Ingo luck.

That should have been the end of it. A perfectly unremarkable stop on the line.

As Ingo turned to take his leave, Kamado had made one last remark. A request to take Akari with him if his search proves successful.

This struck Ingo as odd. Akari may feel just as lost as he does in the ancient past, but she had been given a task upon her arrival. Most everyone, including Akari herself, has been under the impression that she'll be able to go home when she completes the Pokédex.

Does the Commander not know? Or, more likely, he could simply be skeptical of the machinations of god pokémon. Ingo can't blame the man for the latter; Ingo himself would like to have some *words* with whichever one of them derailed him.

Hoping to reassure, Ingo says, "Should her own lead be a dead end, I would be happy to conduct her to my own station."

It's not as if Ingo doesn't want to bring her home with him.

He occasionally entertains the thought of introducing Akari to Emmet. Since both are menaces in their own ways, it would doubtlessly be a disaster, and Ingo would like nothing more than to see it one day. Introducing her to a *proper* subway system would also be a must- he must dissuade her of the notion that the Kalos system is of acceptable quality.

"Thank you, Warden."

Commander Kamado's reply breaks Ingo out of his idle daydreaming.

"Of course, Commander!"

"It would be a relief not to worry about her anymore, Now then, dismiss-"

"Excuse me? Is there something about young Akari that needs worried over?" Had he missed something?

"Only that her arrival is suspicious to many, and that a close eye must be kept on her when in the village, as if there were not enough problems already."

Kamado says all of this as if by rote. Fact.

”At least she’s good at quelling the nobles who are *mysteriously* frenzied,” Kamado adds wryly. Like it’s a joke, that he volunteers her for such dangerous work. Worse, like he believes her at fault for the danger in the first place.

Ingo has missed something, but not about Akari. No, he’s missed that Kamado is apparently unfit to lead a pack of Patrats, let alone a village full of people. Let alone a teenager in desperate need of support.

Ingo has never been an intimidating man. Despite his frown, he’s overall too friendly to be scary to anyone but a toddler. He’s constantly in motion, so he doesn’t end up looming over others very often. Ingo has never had a hot temper, and is too boisterous to be cold.

Ingo has had to learn many new skills while in Hisui.

When he stares down his nose at Kamado, expression shadowed by his cap, he knows he presents an unsettling image. As he stands erect, towering over the other, seemingly uncaring of his superior musculature, Ingo sees the hesitation in the commander’s eyes.

Commander Kamado of the Galaxy Team is intimidated. He should be.

“Commander, correct me, for I must have misunderstood. Do you mean to tell me you believe Akari at fault for the frenzied nobles?”

”There’s no hard evidence, but plenty of circunstancial evidence which I cannot ignore. I don’t believe in coincidences, Warden.”

Ingo makes completely certain his tone will be even before he replies, “Do you blame the rain when you misplace a paper, should they happen on the same day?”

Kamado does not seem to like that much. “Warden, you should leave now, before you cause *trouble* between the Pearl Clan and Galaxy Team.”

That he would even threaten such a thing over a mild insult only affirms Ingo’s belief that this behavior needs addressed immediately.

“You must not have heard yet, Commander, but I am no longer affiliated with the Pearl Clan. I am still warden to Sneasler for as long

as it takes them to find someone else suitable, but no longer than that. Therefore, any problem you have with me is between *us*, not our factions."

"Telling me directly no one will argue should I decide *you* are the threat, and dispose of you accordingly. Good to know."

"I am the threat, Commander Kamado. Please do not forget it."

Ingo nearly laughs when that draws the man up short.

"Care to repeat that?" He asks cuttingly. The danger is obvious. What Kamado can't know is that Ingo is no stranger to clearing danger off the tracks before it harms his passengers.

"Let me clarify, Commander. You know for yourself how talented Akari is because you have *benefited* from her skill at understanding pokémon. Many in Jubilife say she is strong in battle as well. She must be, to face the noble pokémon and live. Akari has done everything in her power to help you, and she is quite powerful indeed."

Akari is a child. Barely even old enough to battle pokémon in an official capacity. She doesn't deserve this man's scorn for her aptitude and drive.

"Despite that power and willingness to help, from this moment on, you will not send her to quell the nobles. You are linking the two phenomena over and over by sending her to do the work, and it is impeding your judgement. Send someone else, so that you may stop drawing incorrect conclusions about someone in your care."

"Do not presume you can give me orders. Akari is part of the Survey Corps, so how I see fit to dispatch her is none of your concern."

"I am more powerful than her," he replies. "She has quelled several nobles, yet I promise you I am stronger than her. This is not a boon to you; it's a warning. Should you continue down tracks that are not in the best interests of her well-being, you may find yourself ***forcibly decommissioned***."

The fear in Kamado's stare doesn't last long, but Ingo is watching him closely, and he sees it clear as day before it is swiftly replaced by rage. Good. If Kamado wants someone to target, let it be Ingo.

"Sending her to quell the nobles *is* for her well-being, as it allows her to prove she's not a threat," Kamado grits out. Trying to be

reasonable, then. He must notice the unsubtle tracing of Ingo's right hand over his Tangrowth's pokeball.

There are other people in this building, after all, and he doesn't know Ingo very well.

"You think she's causing the frenzies just so she can be seen quelling them. Have someone else do it, so you have evidence the task is not as unique a burden as you are making it out to be." Ingo can be reasonable too.

"Why would I send my own security corps members when there's a high chance of failure or death, when the girl can do it just fine? Besides, the more useful she is, the less likely she is to be expelled."

"…expelled? From the village?"

"Should it be necessary."

This man styles himself a leader, and he's talking of banishing a child from the place she's made her home. As if that were an ordinary course of action and not horribly, unforgivably inhumane.

"That would not be a *necessary* decision! It would be absolutely unjustified no matter the reasoning behind it! A complete misuse of your position which would reflect poorly on both you and the people of Jubilife!"

"If I banished Akari it would be for the safety of the people here! For the betterment of all Hisui!"

Perhaps, the Galaxy Team isn't as far from Team Galactic as he may have hoped. Though maybe, at least this one still has time to correct their course, should they be made aware of exactly where they're headed.

"There's a word for those who are comfortable taking advantage of people in dire straights. It is the same word we use for those who mistreat children. The word is evil, Kamado. Consider doing your best to steer your team away from the destination of evil, instead of directly toward it!"

Ingo spins on his heel and strides out quickly, uninterested in anything Kamado could say in response.

When he reaches the first floor of the hall, people are staring. He's not

surprised; his voice is naturally loud and it carries well. What does surprise him, is the shallow nod he receives from Captain Cyllene as he passes her office.

It loosens something in his heart to know that *someone* here is taking Akari's safety seriously.

All detours are temporary. This is what makes them detours. Eventually, the line must either return to its original course, or the map must be changed and new stations built.

Ingo has no intention of building a new home station in Hisui. Especially not now that he finally knows what who is waiting for him at his old one.

That does not mean he doesn't care for this station though, detour or not. The land will need more saving, and he will do what he can to help while looking for a way to modern Unova at the same time.

The people will need saving too. One more so than anyone else, if certain malicious actors have their way.

Irida had told him to ask for her aid should he find himself needing it. He's sure this is not what she meant, but the situation is delicate, and despite his brazen claim to the contrary, any drastic action he takes will still reflect on her.

"Lady Irida, I have an unusual request."

"What is it?"

"When Commander Kamado eventually offers Akari's help in quelling Lord Avalugg, please insist he send someone else."

"What in the name of Almighty Sinnoh are you talking about? Why assume the next frenzy to be Lord Avalugg's and not Braviary's?" She asks defensively.

Ingo does little more than raise an eyebrow when he replies, "It's our turn."

He knows that she knows what he's talking about. She apologizes a bit sheepishly, and he accepts it immediately. This whole frenzy business has made her more sensitive than ever about their ability to care for the noble pokémon, so he easily forgives her for snapping; he's the

one who poked a sore spot.

Irida's gaze turns concerned when she asks, "Why should I reject Akari's help? Is she okay?"

Ingo sighs heavily. "Physically, yes, her cab is in perfect working order. It's her future safety that troubles me. The commander has it in his head that she is to blame for the nobles' frenzied states, and I worry further association between the nobles and Akari will only drive him to further madness."

"He blames her? There's no evidence of that- the opposite is the obvious truth! How could he believe that?"

"I wish I knew."

"Ingo, you seem quite worried about this, but I'm unsure I see why. While I agree it's an alarming view, you said it put her safety at risk."

"He is considering banishing her from Jubilife Village."

"What," she hisses. There's a fury building in her eyes at the thought of the helpful survey recruit being turned away.

"He made it clear to me that he's waiting for her to slip up and prove her ill-intentions. I have met with people like him before though, and experience tells me he will take the first excuse he can to exile Akari, whether she deserves it or not."

Ingo won't say that someone could never deserve to be abandoned, even when they are guilty of wrongdoing. It's true in his time, in his world, but he doesn't want to argue semantics when he knows Irida will agree *Akari* doesn't deserve exile.

Irida takes a very long, calming breath. When she speaks, she asks him gravely, "What reason would you have me give, for requesting that someone else aid Lord Avalugg?"

Not for the first time, Ingo is incredibly grateful that it was the Pearl Clan who found him, all that time ago when he was lost and confused in the snow.

End Notes

Either Kamado concedes to Irida and other people work together to quell Avalugg, leaving Kamado no reason to assume Akari turned the sky red OR she goes anyway, gets banished anyway, and instead of being spirited away by Voló, she and Ingo skip the red chain entirely and have a double battle against Dialga and Palkia at the same time (which they of course win).

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